

**MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF
POLOKWANE, CLLR MAKORO JOHN MPE ON THE
OCCASION OF THE MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE 2026
POLOKWANE CITY MARATHON**

Friday, 17 April 2026 | New Peter Mokaba Stadium

Programme Director, Mr Mantlako Sebaka,
Council Speaker, Cllr Kobela Wilhelmina Modiba,
Council Whip, Cllr Phetola Adolf Rapetswa,
Members of the Mayoral Committee,
The City Manager and your team,
Our valued partners, sponsors and stakeholders,
Polokwane City Marathon runners and supporters,
Most importantly, members of the media present here and
those following us via our Facebook live stream,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today as we officially launch yet another chapter in the sporting story of our great City — a story written in sweat, endurance and the indomitable human spirit.

As the great Nelson Mandela once reminded us, *“Sport has the power to change the world.”* Indeed, it has the power to unite, to inspire and to build bridges where once there were divides. In a municipality such as Polokwane — vibrant, youthful and forward-looking — sport is a strategic instrument for social cohesion, economic stimulation and healthy living.

It is for this reason that, in collaboration with the Polokwane Athletics Club, we proudly host, year after year, the 4-in-1 Polokwane City Marathon — a race that has grown in stature to become an official Comrades Marathon qualifier. You will recall that this event was previously known as the Polokwane Mayoral Marathon. In our quest to build a more inclusive and collective identity, we have since rebranded it to the Polokwane City Marathon — a name that belongs to all who call this city home.

Ladies and gentlemen, the purpose of this marathon is both simple and profound: to position Polokwane as a sporting hub of Limpopo, of South Africa and indeed of the SADC region; to encourage mass participation in sport; to nurture road running development and to promote a culture of healthy, smart living.

As the legendary Emil Zátopek once said, *“If you want to run, run a mile. If you want to experience a different life, run a marathon.”*

This event offers precisely that — an experience that transcends competition and becomes a journey of personal triumph.

Importantly, Polokwane City Marathon is strategically positioned at a peak training period for Comrades Marathon runners — a time when athletes are building high mileage in preparation for the ultimate race. In this regard, our marathon offers a vital platform for runners to accumulate meaningful distance through a Comrades qualifier right here in Polokwane.

In fact, this year's race presents two qualifying opportunities for the Comrades Marathon: the first at the 42.2km mark within 5 hours, and the second at the full 50km ultra distance within 6 hours and 10 minutes. This dual opportunity firmly places Polokwane on the map as a serious contributor to the national road running calendar.

Polokwane City Marathon has shown remarkable growth since its humble beginnings in 2012. The first race, held on 14 May 2012 at the Old Peter Mokaba Stadium, attracted approximately 750 athletes. Today, participation has grown exponentially, and for 2026, the race is capped at 4,000 entries to ensure quality, safety and an optimal runner experience.

Allow me, therefore, to officially confirm that the 2026 Polokwane City Marathon will take place on Saturday, 02 May 2026, starting at 05h30 from the New Peter Mokaba Stadium and finishing at the Polokwane Rugby Field.

This year, participants will compete across the 5km fun run/walk, 10km, 21.1km and the flagship 50km ultra-marathon — a deliberate enhancement introduced to ensure that athletes, particularly those preparing for the Comrades Marathon, have access to a high-quality ultra-distance race within our city.

As Muhammad Ali once aptly put it, *“Don’t count the days; make the days count.”* This ultra-marathon is designed to do exactly that — to test limits, stretch possibilities and prepare athletes for greatness.

The route itself is a true showcase of Polokwane. From the New Peter Mokaba Stadium, runners will head towards Silicon Road before looping back to join Webster Street past EduPark, continuing along Suid Street near the new Central Hospital, through De Wet and Grobler Streets past Netcare Akeso Hospital, and onto the N1 bypass connecting to the R81 near Mall of the North.

The course proceeds through Thornhill, Veldspaat, Landros Mare, Vermikeliet near the Polokwane Traffic Department in Ladanna, Witklip towards Dendron, and into Seshego via the Nelson Mandela route. It then winds past Goseame Open Market, over the bridge into Matlala Road, through Westenburg and Lawton Bridge, reconnecting with the N1 past the Muslim School and Builders Warehouse, and into Ivy Park, Penina Park and Waterland.

From there, runners proceed along Suid and Voortrekker Streets into the CBD, turning into Dorp Street near the Park Inn Hotel, before the final stretch into the Polokwane Rugby Field finish line.

This carefully curated route not only challenges athletes but offers a moving tapestry of our city's growth and development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This marathon is conducted in full compliance with the rules of World Athletics, Athletics South Africa and Limpopo Athletics, ensuring the highest standards of competitive integrity. The 50km ultra-marathon will be officially timed from gun to mat, in line with Comrades qualifying standards.

A total prize purse of R200 000 will be shared among the winners, with the 50km open category offering R15,000 for first place, R10,000 for second place and R5,000 for third place for both men and women. All finishers will receive medals, with distinct medals allocated across the various race distances.

To support runners along the journey, 18 fully equipped water stations will be positioned along the route, stocked with refreshments and nutritional support. These water points have become a hallmark of the Polokwane City Marathon experience, and this year we introduce the Best Water Point Award to recognise excellence among our partners.

Registration is currently open via www.peaktiming.co.za capped at 4 000 participants, with no entries permitted on race day. The first 1 000 entrants receive complimentary race t-shirts across all categories, including the 50km participants. Additional t-shirts will be available for purchase at R180 online and at the Polokwane Athletics Clubhouse at the Old Peter Mokaba Stadium, where manual registrations and race number collections will also take place.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we prepare for this major event, the affected route closures have already been communicated to the public. Our Communications Team will continue to issue updates and reminders to ensure that all road users are well informed.

We therefore urge residents, motorists and visitors to adhere to all temporary road signs and traffic directives on race day and to make use of alternative routes where necessary. Your cooperation will ensure the safety of runners and the seamless execution of the event.

After all, a successful marathon is not only defined by those who cross the finish line, but by the collective discipline of the entire community.

Visitors to Polokwane will, in turn, experience a city in motion — a city investing boldly in its future. From the Netcare Akeso Polokwane facility to the planned Limpopo Central Hospital, from the University of Limpopo medical school to new economic and retail developments such as Greenery Shopping Centre and the Green Ark precinct, our city continues to grow as a destination of choice.

We are equally proud of our investments in sport infrastructure — from Seshego Stadium to community sports complexes,

including the soon-to-be-completed facility in Ext 78/44 and the ongoing developments in Mankweng and beyond.

Since its inception, the Polokwane City Marathon has enjoyed the steadfast support of sponsors including Telkom Business, Coca-Cola, BMW Polokwane, Park Inn, Energy FM, Food Lover's Market, Goseame Fresh Produce Open Market, Polar Ice-Cream Polokwane, the Chinese Community Policing Forum and A1 Supermarket. Your partnership continues to drive this vision forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to also acknowledge our sponsor, in our midst MKG trading as Makgolokwe Projects. They are today donating 32 pairs of tekkies to qualifying clubs. Yesterday they also donated solar system and food parcels to Nkoana family in Marobe. We are grateful.

The success of the 2025 edition demonstrated the power of collaboration in elevating our city's profile and stimulating local economic activity. The 2026 edition promises to raise that bar even higher.

In closing, let me borrow the words of Jesse Owens, who once said, *"We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come*

into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort.”

To every runner — your journey begins now. To the people of Polokwane — this is your race, your city, your moment. Let us lace up, show up and rise together.

I thank you.